

Action Learning:

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Action Learning?

AL is a tool where a group of individuals (a 'set') comes together, to work through challenges and resolve problems they encounter in their professional lives. The approach encourages the individual to take ownership of their issue in order to take action, and learn from their actions. Each member of the set get the chance to address their current issues.

What will I get out of it?

It is a way to get 'unstuck', finding your best solution to move forward with something, whether that is an active problem or a complex project. You will build a network of trusted peers, and learn a new way of approaching challenges.

Working with your fellow set members on *their* issues is also a chance to reflect on your own situation and approaches with a different perspective.

What is a set? How many people are in a set?

The group of people participating in Action Learning is called a set, and the individuals are usually called set members. There will be between 6 – 8 members per set.

Who is eligible? How are the sets put together?

The ID/DCD Action Learning is for independent dance professionals, including dance artists, producers, makers, teachers, choreographers etc.

We choose each group of peers to reflect a range of experiences and backgrounds, to enable rich, multifaceted discussion, based on information on your application form.

If you have any questions and would like to talk this through, please get in touch:

info@independentdance.co.uk 020 7091 9650

dancers@thedcd.org.uk 020 7831 1449

“Action Learning helped me to focus, find clarity of actions and directions to be effective in moving my career forwards.”

2016 AL participant

How often does it happen? How long does it take?

The group will meet 5 times over the course of the year. The first date is set; after that, the set members and facilitator choose the dates and times of meetings.

Do I have to commit to all five sessions?

Yes. In order to build on shared learning and maintain trust, all members commit to attending all five meetings. When projects come to a head, or deadlines approach, it can be difficult to stick to a fixed date in the diary. However, the pay-off of taking the time to pause, reflect and plan with your set more than makes up for it!

Do I have to know anything about it / have had experience of it before I start?

No. The facilitator will guide the set through the sessions. At first, the structure of the meeting can feel a bit alien, but it quickly becomes familiar, and you will find that the tools you learn and practice are useful in other contexts (such as a meeting or rehearsal) as well.

Who runs it?

Independent Dance and Dancers Career Development host this Action Learning programme. The sessions will be facilitated by Delia Barker, an experienced Action Learning facilitator with a background as a producer and manager in the performing arts.

What does it cost?

It costs £135 (£105 concessions) for the series of five half-day AL sessions. The full fee is payable in full by the day of the first meeting.

If you choose to opt out after the first session, you only pay for that one session. If you choose to opt out after that, we cannot refund the fee, as we are not able to replace you once the set is underway. If you are not able to pay the full amount up front, please contact ID regarding a two-stage payment option.

This is the only AL programme aimed at dance professionals, and we have kept the fees as affordable as possible. For comparison, Independent Theatre Council's Action Learning costs £660 (£450 for members) for five 3.5h sessions.

Concessions: JSA, DLA, full-time students, recipients of Universal or Pension Credit – proof of status required

What kind of issues can I bring up? What are the boundaries?

Action Learning is a mentoring process to help individuals grow as professionals. The topics people bring are from their working life and experience. It is not therapy. That said, our underlying attitudes inform our professional behaviour, and Action Learning creates a space where it is possible to confront approaches that do not serve us, and change our thinking and behaviour.

How is the topic decided?

At the beginning of each meeting, each member brings a current issue they would like to resolve or move forward, and the group decides together which ones to present (if there isn't time to work through all of them), and in what order.

Do I have to share personal information with others?

It is up to each set member to choose how much they want to disclose at any given point. Confidentiality is central to Action Learning. There are basic rules to build trust and ensure each member feels safe, and individual sets can agree on additional covenants. The facilitator will help the set to create their confidential space.

What happens if I want to leave my set?

If you wish to leave your set, you will be asked to present to the group at a meeting why you are leaving the set. If you are leaving for practical reasons (e.g. a temporary relocation), you may agree an option to return later on.

What if I am placed in a group and we don't gel?

Before the first meeting, we will send you the list of names of your proposed set. If there is anyone with whom there would be a conflict of interest, we will discuss with you the best way forward.

After the first meeting, if you feel AL is not for you, you can opt out.

Once the group is formed, you are likely to be in a group of people with sufficient common ground to form a functioning group – each of you has actively chosen to take part. AL works well when there are different perspectives, experiences and modes of thinking in the group.

Are there any follow up sessions? How does it develop over time?

After five meetings, the set concludes, and the members review their development over the course of the year.

Often, sets choose to continue to meet after the initial five meetings, building on the trust and mutual understanding they have created over the course of the year. Some choose to self-facilitate, now that they are familiar with the method, others opt to engage a professional facilitator.

Where can I find out more?

Try these online resources:

<http://www.actionlearningassociates.co.uk/action-learning/>

<http://ifal.org.uk/action-learning/>

<http://www.itapintl.com/index.php/about-us/articles/creating-opportunities-for-reflection-in-action-learning>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Action_learning

<https://www.itc-arts.org/training/action-learning>

http://umanitoba.ca/admin/human_resources/change/media/the-art-of-powerful-questions.pdf